

CHIEF OF STAFF, ARMY, RETIREE COUNCIL ISSUE

ASCC: Army in Europe

INSTALLATION: Army in Europe

SUBJECT: DFAS Representation in Federal Benefits Units of US Embassies

DISCUSSION: For military retirees and surviving family members residing outside the United States, it is extremely difficult to obtain assistance from DFAS on financial matters due to the time change, the different hours of operations of DFAS, and the fact that many survivors are not capable of explaining their problems and understanding the answers to their questions in English.

In every foreign country in which a fairly large number of Americans live, the Department of State has established a Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) to assist US citizens, as well as non-citizens, with obtaining benefits and solving problems arising with US governmental entitlements, such as those from the Social Security Administration, the US Railroad Retirement Board, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Office of Personnel Management. The FBUs are staff with local national employees trained to be subject-matter experts.

However, the FBUs are neither staffed nor trained to provide similar assistance to DFAS beneficiaries, even though retired pay and annuitant pay are federal benefits.

If the personnel in selected FBUs were augmented or crossed-trained, they could provide expert assistance in responding to questions and in solving problems on DFAS matters, both in English and in the language of the host nation.

The FBU in Consulate in Frankfurt, Germany, would be such a location and would be an ideal for a test of the recommended program.

Recommend Chief of Staff, Army, urge the Director of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service to coordinate with the Department of State to provide FBUs in countries in which a relatively large number of US military retiree and survivors reside with the capability of providing expert assistance on DFAS matters.

APPROVED BY THEATER RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIR: COL Robert A. Mentell, United States Army Retired.